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See page 37.

THE LOVE-TRYST

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Tristan and Isolda

(Tristan und Isolde)

A · DRAMATIC · POEM · BY · RICHARD WAGNER · FREELY · TRANSLATED · IN POETIC · NARRATIVE · FORM · BY

Oliver Huckel

Thomas Y. Crowell Company
PUBLISHERS · NEW YORK

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TO MY WIFE

IN MEMORY OF RARE DAYS TOGETHER
AT TINTAGEL
ON THE WEIRD COAST OF CORNWALL
WHERE CENTURIES AGO
ACCORDING TO THE LEGEND
LIVED AND LOVED TRISTAN AND ISOLDA

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FOREWORD

TRISTAN and Isolda is claimed by music-lovers as Wagner's masterpiece. It is certainly his freest and most inspired music. The poem is also a masterpiece in the high and holy passion that glows within it. It is full of the elemental energy of the human race. It is typical of the deepest and strongest emotions of humanity, — a high song of love, — universal in its meaning, and almost cosmic in its wonderful breadth of outlook.

Parsifal is Wagner's most sacred and sublime drama, transfigured, as it is, with the mystic glories of redemption; and The Master-Singers of Nuremberg is his most human production, reflecting the homely wit and quaint conceits of the common folk of Germany. But Tristan and Isolda is the high-water mark of his genius, — a pure, untrammelled inspiration, born of a great human experience and a divine aspiration.

It will be remembered that Dante has touched upon the tragedy of Tristan and Isolda in his immortal Divina Commedia, and that Tennyson also has treated the same story at length in one of his Idylls of the King; but not even Tennyson has reached the white intensity and awful ecstasy of Wagner's throbbing lines. Wagner's tragedy was wrung from his very heart, although he began it seemingly in imagination. Recall his Diary: "As I never in my life have felt the real bliss of love, I must erect a monument to the most beautiful of all my dreams, in which, from beginning to end, that love shall be

thoroughly satiated. I have in my head Tristan and Isolda, — the simplest but most full-blooded musical conception; with the black flag which floats at the end of it, I shall cover myself to die." And his Diary concluded: "Here will the Tristan be completed, — a defiance to all the raging of the world. And with that, an I may, shall I return to see thee, comfort thee, to make thee happy: there looms my fairest, my most sacred wish. So be it! Sir Tristan, Lady Isolda! help me, help my angel! Here shall thy wounds cease bleeding, here shall they heal and close. For here shall the world once learn the sublime and noblest stress of highest love, the plaints of agonizing joy, and august as a god, serene and hale, shalt thou then behold me, thy lowly friend."

Between these two leaves from Wagner's Diary came the actual tragic experience, — the strange and fateful drama which forever inspired and yet forever saddened his life, — that drama in which the inspiration was Mathilde Wesendonck, his dearest friend, his own Isolda.

We need not enter into the details of the story of that real love tragedy. She has told us that when she first met Richard Wagner she was "a blank page." Upon this page Wagner inscribed the music-drama of Tristan and Isolda. These few facts may be mentioned. She was born at Elberfeld, in Germany, in 1828, and was thus fifteen years his junior. She was educated at Düsseldorf and Dunkirk. In 1848 she married Otto Wesendonck. For two years or more

they lived in America. In 1857 they settled again in Europe, at Zurich. She was a woman of very decided literary ability, and wrote many books in prose and verse. Wagner formed a friendship with this family, and finally went to live near them in the suburbs of Zurich in April, 1857. On July 4 he wrote: "The poem of Tristan is still slumbering in me; I shall shortly proceed to call it to life." He wrote the first draft in prose, completing it August 20. Less than a month later, on September 18, 1857, he completed the poem of Tristan and Isolda, and presented it to Mathilde Wesendonck. A year later he wrote in his Venice Diary: "A year gone to-day I finished the poem of Tristan and brought thee its last act. Thou led'st me to the chair before the sofa, placedst thy arm around me and saidst: 'I no more have a wish!' On this day, at this hour was I born anew." The inspiration of the music now began to take shape. But in the midst came a sudden flight of Wagner from Zurich, and the romance was at an end. The whole story is told in the published correspondence. It is a strange episode of romantic love and sentimental German friendship. But from its sorrow and tears the world is the richer for the fervent and ecstatic inspiration of Tristan and Isolda.

The music of this drama is impressive from its tragic intensity as well as its unearthly beauty. Much of it is sombre and sad; much of it is as weird and dreamlike as the witchery of night, or as soft and wavelike as the restless sea. Only here and there are sounded the jubilant and

triumphant notes. The yearning of the life-weary soul is portrayed; the ecstasy and delirium of love; the passionate longing for death. There is the fascination and melody of slumber in it. To many it is the most wonderful of all his music, — one critic contending, "Wagner has written more complex works, but it is doubtful if ever he penned a more effective bit of musical writing than these immortal pages of Tristan and Isolda."

The tale itself which Wagner used as his basis is as old as the ninth century, possibly older. It is often called "the world's greatest love story." There have been other pairs of famous lovers, Paolo and Francesca, Abelard and Heloise, Launcelot and Guinevere, Romeo and Juliet; but about Tristan and Isolda sympathy and human interest have been great on account of the heroic quality and the desperate hopelessness of the tragedy. Wagner drew his material directly from the ancient version of Gottfried von Strassburg, but ennobled the tale, and made Tristan a finer hero than in the ancient legends. He also improved dramatic unity by eliminating a second Isolda who appears in some of the ancient legends. Studies of the origin and development of the Tristan legend may be found in Tristan et Iseud, by Gaston Paris, and Die Sage von Tristan und Isolda, by Dr. Wolfgang Golther. The English form of the legend first appeared in Sir Thomas Malory's Morte d'Arthur, and has been treated in various forms by Sir Walter Scott, Algernon Swinburne in Tristram of Lyonesse, Lord Ten-

nyson in The Last Tournament, and Matthew Arnold in Tristram and Iseult. It is probable that Wagner knew Matthew Arnold's poem, published in 1852. Wagner was in London in 1855 with English friends. His own poem was written in 1857, and seems to incorporate the dramatic ending of the English poem. A most interesting comparison between these English versions of the legend as treated by Malory, Matthew Arnold, Tennyson, and Swinburne is given in Mr. H. E. Krehbiel's Studies in the Wagnerian Drama.

The ethics of the story has provoked some discussion. It is a human document with a real love. Tristan and Isolda are in love with each other before the episode of the love-potion. That merely serves the purpose of "unleashing the bonds of reserve" which Tristan had placed upon himself, and of making them both more or less irresponsible. But the drama is that of actual love, — not a fictitious passion. It is a drama of warm flesh and blood. The interest of King Mark in his wedding had been largely political. The tragedy is in the hopelessness of the real love, hurried on by a relentless fate. The love-philtre in Wagner's drama, as Mr. W. J. Henderson has pointed out, performs the same office as Fate in the ancient Greek tragedy. In the plays of Sophocles and Aeschylus mortals fulfil their manifest destinies, driven on by Fate. So in this drama, the helpless victims are hurled onward by a cruel and inexorable destiny. Such a conception does complicate the ethical responsibilities. Their overpower-

ing love is their exaltation and punishment; their ecstasy and their despair; their heaven and their hell. It brings bliss and infinite suffering, and death.

In this drama, and especially in the finale, Schopenhauer's influence upon Wagner is manifest in the exaltation of renunciation and the ecstatic desire for death. In a letter to Franz Liszt in which the first mention of Tristan and Isolda occurs, is also this reference: "A man has come like a gift of heaven into my solitude. This is Arthur Schopenhauer, the greatest philosopher since Kant. His chief idea, the final negation of life, is terribly serious. . . . I have found in it a quietus which in wakeful nights helps me to sleep. This is the genuine ardent longing for death, for absolute unconsciousness, total non-existence." Such a reference helps to explain the undertone of the drama, and especially Isolda's absolute and beatific resignation in death.

Wagner came to a larger vision in his late works, especially in Parsifal, which was the fullest confession of the faith of his maturest years. Some traces of Schopenhauer still remain, but the negation of life is now replaced by a divine pity and a loving service. He had grown with the years.

The drama was first produced in Munich on June 10, 1865, under the auspices of his royal patron, King Ludwig of Bavaria. In later years the friendship of Wagner with the Wesendoncks was renewed, and they became ardent enthusiasts of the Bayreuth music-festivals.

Many may see in this drama a stern lesson, — the swift punishment of unlawful love, the truth of the ancient oracle: "The wages of sin is death." The bliss and ecstasy were fully paid by tears and blood and death. Wagner felt that it was a defiance to all the world of law and order, — this love that burst all bonds. He was faithful, however, to truth in the tragic consequences and the awful cost. Others will see in the drama only the strange, unfathomable fact of matchless, overmastering love, such as has been more than once known in this world's sad but fascinating history.

Something tender, beautiful, and pathetic is in this great tragedy. It grips the heart. The love-potion is fiction, but the love is reality. There is tremendous feeling and a profound experience in it. "All the world loves a lover." The story of Tristan and Isolda will never die. There is here that love so great that "many waters cannot quench it, nor the flood drown it," — love that is ennobled by its fidelity and grandeur, love that is triumphant over life and death. There is something supreme in such deep elemental passion.

OLIVER HUCKEL

July, 1913

PART I. THE LOVE POTION

THE LOVE POTION

A SHIP'S deck, and the sob of wailing winds
Around the rigging, and the rise and dip
Upon the gentle sway of swelling waves.
A tent-like chamber, by rich hangings made,
Worthy of royal guests. And on a couch,
Her face deep-buried in the cushions, lay
Isolda, fairest princess of fair Erin.
Drawing a curtain back, her maid Brangäna
Peered out upon the billows with strange gaze.
Aloft a sailor from the mast-head sang:

"WESTWARD roam our eyes,
Eastward rolls the ship,—
Fresh from home the winds
Blow, and heave, and dip!

"Darling Irish child,
What dost thou do at home?
Winds waft us thy sighs,
Sternly bid us roam!

"Blow, thou cruel breath,
And woe, oh, woe, my child!
God guard thee, darling one,
Winsome and so wild!"

Now, as the sailor sang his chantry soft,
Isolda started up in wild dismay
And cried: "Who dares to mock my inmost soul?

Brangäna, say! and tell me where we are!"
And looking seaward, quickly spake the maid:
"Blue streaks are rising in the cloudy west,
And swift and sure the good ship ploughs her way;
If for this single day the sea be still,
By evening shall we reach the hoped-for land."
Isolda asked: "What is this hoped-for land?"
Spake she: "The shores of Cornwall, close at hand."
Then moaned the princess, sobbing in distress:
"Nay, nevermore, — to-day, nor yet to-morrow!"
At this despairing cry Brangäna looked
To her young mistress; from her trembling hand
The curtain slipped, and hastening to her side
She asked: "What mean you, mistress, by these words?"
But the fair princess wildly gazed before her,
Distraught, and cried in fiercest scorn:
"Degenerate me! Unworthy of my fathers!
Where, mighty mother, bearing me in pain,
Hast thou concealed within me the weird power
That wills the might of tempest and of sea?
Worthless the magic that brews only balms
To soothe and heal! Awake within my breast
The prowess turbulent to do great deeds!
Come, timid winds, and stir ye unto battle!
Lash with your tempest and your furious anger!
Wake from its sleep this softly dreaming sea!
Rouse its abysses of unceasing hunger!
And to it cast the prey my wrath hurls forth!

This haughty ship, be it engulfed and shattered!
And, O ye battling winds, take for your own
The gasping of the last breath of the dead!"

And as she spoke in wildness and despair
Her maid Brangäna cried in deep alarm:
"Woe's me! Alas! The evil I foresaw!
Isolda, mistress dear, O truest heart!
What secret hast thou hid from me so long?
Without a tear, forsaking father and mother,
And scarce a farewell word to all thy friends;
How cold and still thou wert leaving thy home!
How pale and speechless on the weary journey!
Disdaining food, and reft of soothing sleep,
Wild and distracted, wretched and distressed,
My heart is wrung, seeing thy sorry plight!
For now I seem to be as naught to thee,
Estranged from all the sorrow of thy heart!
Oh, make me partner of thy hidden woe
And tell me freely of thy torturing fears!
Lady Isolda, sweetest, dearest friend,
If thou dost deem me worthy of the trust,
Confide in thy Brangäna."
With a cry
Isolda's voice broke in: "Air! Give me air!
Or my sad heart will stop. Open the curtains!
Quick, open them full wide!"
And at the word
Brangäna drew apart the heavy hangings
For the sea breeze, and the long stretch of blue.
And now the full length of the ship was seen
Up to the stern. About the mainmast gathered,
The sailors were at work with ropes and tackle;

Beyond were groups of knights and their attendants;
Apart stood Tristan in deep thoughtful mood
With folded arms and gaze fixed o'er the sea.
While Kurvenal, his faithful servant, rested
In careless posture at his master's feet.
Once more from the young sailor all unseen
Upon the mast-head came a strain of song:

"WESTWARD roam our eyes,
Eastward rolls the ship, —
Fresh from home the winds
Blow, and heave, and dip!

"Darling Irish child,
What dost thou do at home?
Winds waft us thy sighs,
Sternly bid us roam!

"Blow, thou cruel breath,
And woe, oh, woe, my child!
God guard thee, darling one,
Winsome and so wild!"

At once Isolda's eyes found Tristan there
And fixed themselves in gaze intent and sad,
While to herself she muttered gloomily:
"O my beloved one! my lost one now!
Lordly and strong, brave, thrice-brave, yet so weak;
Fair head to death devoted, and fond heart
To death devoted!"
With a hollow laugh
Against her heart and nature, quick she asked:

"What thinkest thou, my friend, of yonder knight?"
Brangäna followed with her eyes, and asked:
"Whom dost thou mean?"
She spake embittered:
"That hero yonder, he who turns away
His eyes from mine. In shrinking shame and guilt,
He cannot meet my full and steadfast gaze.
Now say, how seemeth this bold knight to thee?"

In deep amaze, quick the faithful maid:
"You mean Sir Tristan, dearest mistress mine?
The wonder of all realms, chief prize-winner,
The hero without rival, he whose fame
Is bruited round the great world far and wide?"
But with derision fair Isolda added:
"Who runs before the lash to hide his shame,
Because he brings his lord a corpse for bride!
Seem dark the senseless words my lips let fall?
Go ask this hero, — dare he come to me?
Mark how he fails to yield the simple meed,
The common grace of pleasant courtesies;
Forgets, this timid hero, what he owes
His sovereign mistress in due reverence —
Answers no glance of mine, this knight unequalled!
Well he knows why! Go to this proud one now,
And take my order to him. Tell him I
Command him straightway to attend me here."

Brangäna asked, seeking to soothe her ire:
"Shall I beseech him to attend thee here?"
But with deep feeling sternly fierce she spake:
"Nay, order him to come. And tell him, I,
Isolda, sovereign mistress, send the word,
Command him, as her vassal, to attend."

She spake imperious, and with regal sign,
Sent forth Brangäna to make known her will.
Along the deck among the sailor groups
The maid passed quickly, wending toward the stern.
Isolda followed her with steadfast eyes,
Sinking upon her couch, but watching still
Her every movement as she walked astern.
Now as Brangäna came, shrewd Kurvenal,
Scarce rising, plucked Sir Tristan's robe and spake:
"Tristan, be on thy guard. Word from Isolda!"

And Tristan started: "What is it? Isolda?"
But soon he spake in gracious courtesy
As near Brangäna drew and bowed to him:
"From my liege lady, loyally I hear her,—
What is the word her trusted maid doth bring?"

And she began: "My lord, Sir Tristan, please,
My mistress would have speech with thee at once."
He answered: "Is she weary with the voyage?
Tell her, the end is near. Ere set of sun
We shall touch land,—and what my lady wills,
Then shall I be most faithful to fulfil."

The maid protested: "'T is her wish, Sir Tristan,
That thou shalt come to her this very hour."
The Knight spake on: "Where yonder meadows green
Show blue with distance waits my sovereign king
For his fair queen, my sovereign mistress here.
Soon shall I come to my illustrious lady,
To lead her to his presence, and to none
Would I give up such honor fair and rare."

Brangäna urged: "Lord Tristan, list to me, —
My lady's will is that thou come to her, —
Now, where she graciously awaiteth thee."
Spake Tristan: "Yea, wherever I may be
I truly serve but her, the pearl of women.
But should I leave the helm, how could I bring
Her and the ship in safety to King Mark?"

Then cried the maid: "Lord Tristan, mock me not!
If the dull maid hath blunted a plain speech,
Harken unto my lady's very words!
Thus, did she bid me speak — 'Go, say to him,
Isolda doth command thee to attend her;
Thy sovereign mistress doth command her vassal.'"

Spake Kurvenal, upspringing from the ground:
"May I make answer to this stern command?"
And Tristan looked upon him and replied:

"And what, forsooth, would be thine answering word?"

He spake: "Be this the answer to Isolda:
'Who gives to Erin's daughter Cornwall's crown
And England's isle, cannot give more to her
Except to bring the bride safe to the king.'
Tristan, the hero, lord of all the world,
So I have cried it forth! now, say it thou —
Now let Isolda heap her wraths on me!"

While Tristan sought to check him by a sign,
Brangäna turned and went away offended,
And Kurvenal sang after her in scorn:

"LORD Morold sped over the ocean
Tribute on Cornwall to levy, —
On a desert isle they dug his grave;
For his wounds were deep and heavy.

"His head they sent back to Erin, —
So England hath paid her tax!
And oh, hail to our hero Tristan
Of the sword and battle-axe!"

But Tristan stopped the song with angry words
And drove him by his chidings to the cabin.
While in discomfiture Brangäna ran
To her fair mistress, and drew tight the curtains,
For all the soldiers on the after-deck
Took up the boasting song and loudly sang:

"HIS head they sent back to Erin, —
So England hath paid her tax!
And oh, hail to our hero Tristan
Of the sword and battle-axe!"

Alone within the curtains closely drawn
Isolda rose in anger and despair,
As poor Brangäna, falling at her feet,
Exclaimed: "Woe's me! that must endure all this!"
At once Isolda stirred in wild outburst,
But held herself in check as quick she gasped:
"What now? does Tristan dare defy my will?"
But her maid cried: "Oh, ask me not, I pray!"
Isolda spake: "Nay, tell me without fear!"
Then she replied: "With courtly words and fair
He foiled me and evaded thy command."
Isolda asked: "But when thou spakest plain?"
She answered: "Yea, when I commanded him
In thy name to attend thee now and here,
Thus made he answer: 'Truly would I serve
This pearl of women, but should I desert
The helm, how could I bring her and the ship
In safety to the land and to King Mark?'"

With scorn Isolda echoed bitterly:
"'How could I bring the ship and her, forsooth,
In safety to the land and to King Mark?' —
To King Mark, to bestow on him the tax
So fiercely and so wrongly wrung from Erin!"
Brangäna added: "As I spake thy words
As plain as thou didst order me to do,
His henchman Kurvenal made bold to speak —"

"I heard him," said Isolda, "all too well,
And naught of his bold words escaped my ear.
Now, since thou hast been witness to this shame,
Harken unto the cause from whence it grew.
How scoffingly they sing their mocking songs!
Well could I pay them back in their own coin,
And chant the mocking song of a frail skiff
That floated once upon our Irish coast,
And lying in it a poor stricken wretch,
Piteous, gaunt, and gasping his last breath.
And how Isolda's art brought him to life;
How, with her healing salves and juice of balsams,
Faithful she soothed and cured his torturing wounds.
He named himself as Tantris in his cunning,
But soon Isolda knew that he was Tristan;
For in her patient's mighty sword she marked
A notch wherein a splinter-blade did fit
Which her own hand had found in Morold's head
When that insulting token, gory-red,
Had been sent back to Erin in high scorn.
Then from the depths it seemed I heard a voice
And, with a shining sword, I came to him
With deadly purpose in my heart to slay
And take a quick revenge for Morold's death.
But from his bed he looked at me so strange,—
Not on the sword he looked, nor on my hand,
But into my eyes' depths he gazed and gazed,
And all his helplessness appealed to me.
The sword that had slain Morold fell from me,
And in its stead I sought to heal and save,

So that, again grown strong, he might return
Back to his house and home, and haunt no more
My heart with that appealing look of his."
Brangäna cried: "O wonder! where my eyes!
That guest whom often I had helped to nurse—"

But fair Isolda spake: "Hark! how they sing
His praises, shouting: 'Hail! our brave Tristan!'—
Ah, what a fine and faithful man to trust!
He swore to me a thousand vows of faith,
A thousand oaths of love eternal true.
Now mark thee how a hero keeps his oath:
He who as Tantris bade me fond farewell
Boldly as Tristan dared to come again,
And from the high deck of his saucy galley
Dared to invoke me, heiress of all Erin,
To give myself in wedlock to King Mark,
His worn-out uncle in old worn-out Cornwall.
Ah, if the valiant Morold were alive,
Would any dared such outrage upon us!
A petty Cornish king, a tribute-payer,
Presuming to ensnare fair Erin's crown!
Ah, woe is me, for surely 't was myself
That brought this utter shame upon my house,
When the avenging sword escaped my hand
Instead of swinging a death-dealing blow;
Now to my own vassal must I be the slave.
Curses be on thee, traitor! Curses dire!
Vengeance and death,—yea, death to both of us!"

With tenderness impassioned rose Brangäna

And flung herself upon Isolda, crying:
"O sweet one! O true heart! Dear, pure, and gracious!
My golden mistress, loving, kind Isolda!
Hear me, and come and sit thee down by me!"
And so she drew her to the couch and spake:
"What a wild fancy, and what groundless anger!
Why so deceive thyself? Canst thou not see?
How could Lord Tristan pay thee what he owes
Better than with this lordliest of crowns?
For while most loyally he serves his kinsman,
He serves thee likewise with this royal gift.
So leal his honor that he gives his heirship
To throw it at thy feet and hail thee queen!"
Isolda turned away. The maid spake on:
"If he has won King Mark as husband for thee,
Canst thou complain? Is he not worthy of thee?
His is a noble race, his mind is gentle;
Who hath excelled him e'en in might and splendor?
If such a knight as Tristan gladly serves him,
Should not his favored bride be proud and glad?"

But gazing fixedly, Isolda spake:
"How could I always see him whom I love
So nigh me, and yet be by him unloved?
How could I stand such deep and ceaseless torture?"

And thinking that she spoke of good King Mark,
Who might not love her, quickly cried her maid:

"By him unloved! What foolish words are these!"
She soothed her and caressed her, as she added:
"Where has there lived a man who loved thee not?
Who that has ever looked upon Isolda
But in enchantment fell beneath her charm?
Yet, should it happen that some one were cold
Whose love thou didst desire, perchance, I say,
If some dark magic drew him from thy side,
Well know I how to bring the ingrate back
And bind him in the chains of mighty love—"

She drew still nearer and in mystery spake:
"Dost thou not know the dark arts of thy mother?
And thinkest thou that she who knew them well
Has sent me with thee to a far, strange land
Without a forethought how to serve thy need?"

Isolda answered, but in gloomy mood:
"Thou hast done well to tell me of my mother,
Grateful am I for all her magic arts;
They bring revenge against the smooth betrayer;
They bring heart's-ease to wounded souls in need.
Fetch me the casket yonder."
Spake her maid:
"It holds close hid a balm that will avail thee."

Whereat, she brought a tiny golden casket

And opened it, and pointing quickly said:
"Within in fairest order thy wise mother
Has placed mysterious philtres, magic draughts,
Balms for all woes and wounds, and antidotes
For all the deadly poisons of the world."
Then taking up a little phial, she added:
"The bravest drink of all, — I have it here!"
But quickly looking all the casket through,
Isolda found another phial and cried:
"Nay, thou art wrong. I know a better one!
I know it by my mark. See, here it is!
This is the magic draught that I would drain!"
Dismayed, Brangäna cried: "The drink of death!"

But fair Isolda from the couch had risen,
For with increasing dread she heard the cries
Of sailors, and the chantries of the crew:

"HEAVE ho! and heave ho!
Reef sail and let it blow!
Off to the yard-arms go!
Heave ho! and heave ho!"

And with a bitter sigh, Isolda moaned:
"Too swift the voyage! Woe's me! So near the land."

Scarce had she spoke, when Kurvenal drew near,
Parting the curtains, and with bluster cried:
"Up, ladies, up! Bestir yourselves, I pray.
Be blithe and gay, for near us is the shore.

My lord and hero Tristan bids me say
To Lady Isolda that from the masthead
Flutters our flag of peace gallant to landward;
To King Mark's castle it announces us.
Therefore he prays the Lady Isolda
Will hasten to prepare herself for landing,
And thither he is honored to attend her."

At first she cowered and shuddered at the message,
But soon she spake with dignity and calm:
"Take to Lord Tristan greeting, say to him
That it were all unseemly thus to go
To King Mark side by side, unmeet, ungentle,
Until he seeks my pardon for a wrong
Yet unatoned: so bid him seek my grace."

As Kurvenal defiant looked, she added:
"Now mark well what I say and give it truly:
Naught will I yet prepare to land with him,
Nor by his side will go to King Mark's throne,
Until, as it is fitting, he doth sue
For my forgiveness and my quick forgetting
Of his base wrong and trespass. Only thus
Can he win back my favor and my grace."

Spake Kurvenal: "Be sure, I 'll say thy speech;
Await how he will hear these words I bring."
With hurried strides he went, and Isolda
Ran to her maid, embraced her fervently,
And cried: "Farewell, Brangäna! Greet them all,
Greet father, mother, every one for me!"

Surprised she asked: "What now! What meaneth this?
And wouldst thou flee? and whither must I follow?"
Sudden, Isolda checked herself, and said:
"Didst thou not hear me? Here I will abide;
Tristan I will await. — Now serve me faithful
As I command thee. Quickly mix the draught,
The cup of peace, the cup of expiation.
Thou knowest, for I showed thee, how 't is made."

Startled, Brangäna asked: "What drink was that?"
Isolda, finding in the golden casket
The flask she sought, out-held it, as she spake:
"This draught it is! Into the golden cup
Pour the full draught. The cup will hold it all."
But struck with terror, she received the flask
Low muttering: "Can I believe my senses?"
Isolda called: "Mind thou art faithful to me!"
She spake: "The draught — for whom do I prepare it?"
Isolda cried: "For him who has betrayed me."
She asked in horror at the thought: "For Tristan?"
Isolda answered: "He shall drink atonement."
But in an agony of woe, the maid
Fell at her mistress' feet, and moaned in pain:
"O horror! Spare me from this piteous deed!"

Isolda cried in passionate despair:
"Spare thee! Spare me and pity, faithless maid!
Hast thou forgot my mother's magic arts?

And thinkest thou that she who knew them well
Has sent thee with me to this far strange land
Without a forethought how to serve my need?
Balms for all woes she gave, and antidotes
For deadly poisons, and for deepest woe
And direst wound she mingled the death-drink.
Now let Death thank her for the gift supreme!"

Scarce able to control herself, Brangäna moaned:
"O deepest grief!"
She cried: "Wilt thou obey?"
Again Brangäna moaned: "O woe supreme!"
Isolda asked again: "Wilt thou be faithful?"
And in despair, the maid exclaimed: "The draught!"

Scarce had she spoke, when Kurvenal drew near
And pushing past the curtains cried: "Sir Tristan!"
All dazed and terror-struck, Brangäna rose,
But fair Isolda kept herself in check
And calmly spake: "Sir Tristan may approach."

So Kurvenal went forth to bring his master.
Brangäna, deeply troubled, slowly walked
Within the shadow, but Isolda, strong
In will, and resolute in purpose brave,
Came with a lofty mien and took her place
Beside the couch, her hand upon its head,
And fixed her eyes upon the curtained entrance.

A moment more and Tristan entered there,
And paused with deep respect, and gently said:
"Lady, demand of me whate'er thou wilt."

Ah! beauteous Isolda, with the eyes
So proud and dark that men's hearts thrill with woe;
A ruddy bloom upon her dainty cheek
Born of the heather bloom of Erin's hills;
With raven tresses in a billowy flood
Like an imperious crown upon her brow;
A neck where pearls are strung like silver stars
And on her white arms golden bracelets flash,
Heavy and rare; and all her flowing robe
Of silken tapestries and fine brocade
The richness of a princess of the blood.
Brilliant her speech, and fiery her young heart.

She spake: "Dost thou not know full well my wish?
'T was fear of it that kept thee from mine eyes."
But Tristan answered in deep humble mood:
"'T was reverence for thee that kept me back."

But quick she said: "Scant honor deem I this—
When openly thou hast withheld obedience."
Firm he persisted: "Nay, you wrong me thus.
Obedience 't was that kept me from thy side."

But sneeringly she spake: "Methinks, small thanks
Do I now owe my lord, the King, if thus

His service doth allow such boorish manners
Unto his promised bride."
But Tristan spake:
"It is the custom always in our land
That he who brings a bride home to a bride-
groom
Should on the journey keep far from her side."
Isolda archly asked: "And wherefore so?"
He answered merely: "Thus, it is the custom."

Then with more serious voice she slowly
spake:
"Since, my Lord Tristan, thou hast given good
heed
To custom, let me now recall another:
For evil unatoned make sure atonement
And turn thine enemy into thy friend."

But Tristan asked: "Mine enemy — who is it?"
Most earnestly she spake: "Ask but thy fears!
There floateth up blood-guilt between us two!"
Quickly he answered: "That was full atoned."
Isolda answered: "Not between us two."

Tristan persisted: "Yea, in open field
Before the people was the feud abandoned,
Sworn was the oath that ended all revenge."

But with a gentle scorn she answered him:
"It was not there that I held Tantris hidden
When Tristan dying lay. In open field
Lordly he stood, brawny and brave and bright,
Yet in his truce I took no smallest part.
I had learned silence in that quiet chamber

Where sick he lay. With the drawn sword I stood
Silent and stern before him, still of hand;
Yet what my hand and lips had erstwhile promised
I swore in silence I would surely do—
And now my solemn vow I come to keep."

He spake: "What was thy solemn vow, my lady?"
Quickly the words she hissed: "Vengeance for Morold!"
Calmly he asked: "Does that prey on thee still?"

Then stirred, she cried: "And dost thou dare to flout me?
Was not that Knight of Erin my betrothed?
'T was I that put my blessing on his sword,
For me alone he drew it in the fight.
And when he fell, it was my glory fell.
Then in my anguished heart I made this vow:
If not a man be left to give him vengeance,
Then I, though a mere maid, will dare the deed.
Oh, why, when thou wert weak and in my power,
Did I not slay thee, half-dead as thou wert!—
Perchance thy cunning wit may guess the reason.
Thy wounds I soothed and cured with secret hope
That when again thy hurts were healed, Isolda
Might find a friend to smite thee in revenge.
But now thyself thy future canst foretell,
For since all men seem gracious unto thee,
Who shall lay low Sir Tristan at my word?"

But Tristan, pale and sad, held out his sword
And spake: "Was Morold then so dear to thee?
Then take again this sword and hold it sure,
That this time it shall fail not in its work."

Quoth she: "Nay, keep thy sword which once I swung
When all my bosom hungered for revenge;
Yet when thy wondering eyes devoured my soul, —
As thou, forsooth, sought me for thy King Mark, —
Somehow the sword fell from me to the ground.
Now let us drink atonement and forgiveness."

She beckoned to Brangäna, but the maid
Trembled and tarried. Then Isolda urged
With more imperious sign. And as she went
To mix the draught, the sailors' song was heard:

"HEAVE ho! and heave ho!
Reef sail and let it blow!
Off to the yard-arms go!
Heave ho! and heave ho!"

From gloomy thoughts Tristan aroused himself
And looking slowly round, he asked: "Where are we?"
Isolda spake: "Where are we? Near our goal.
Tristan, have I not won thy full forgiveness?
Hast thou no kindly word to say to me?"

But still in gloom he darkly answered her,
For in his soul he had discerned her purpose:
"The mistress of deep silence keeps me mute;
Well do I know the meaning of her thoughts,
But I keep silent what she fathoms not."
She spake: "Thy silence I have fathomed well,
Thou wouldst evade me and deny me still.
Dost thou begrudge me friendship and forgiveness?"

Loud came the sailors' shouts and lusty songs.
And at a sign, Brangäna slow drew near,
Handing the brimming goblet to her mistress.
Isolda held it for a fateful moment,
Then brought it close to Tristan, who, distraught,
Saw nothing but the beauty of her eyes
And gazed immovably into their depths.

She spake: "Tristan, the sailors' song thou heardst!
It is our journey's end. Ere long we stand
With joy, forsooth, in presence of King Mark."

Again the sailors shouted with loud din:

"UP with the tow-line!
Down the anchor goes!"

And Tristan started: "Down the anchor goes!
Her stern to the stream, — her sails to all the winds!"
He snatched the cup from her and wildly cried,
Eager to drink the draught to drown the griefs

With which his desperate heart was overwhelmed:
"Ah! know I not the wondrous queen of Ireland
And all her magic powers and strange enchantments?
Did not her balsams heal me of my wounds?
Now let me drink this cup —that I, to-day,
Shall drink joy to the full. Now let me pay
My all-atoning oath, which unto thee
I make with all my heart in full thanksgiving,
With Tristan's honor pledged, with Tristan's truth,
With Tristan's penitence and Tristan's prowess!
With all his fond illusion and his dream
Of sorrow so foreboding, so immortal,—
Kindly oblivion, with joy I drink thee!"

He raised the cup and drank, but with a start
She wrested from his hand the goblet, crying:
"E'en now thou wouldst betray me! Leave me thus!
Nay, I must share. Traitor, I drink to thee."

She drank, and threw the goblet to the ground.
Each, filled with terror, gazed with deep emotion
Upon the other, rigid, all unwavering—
Gazed in each other's eyes, and there defiance
Gave way to glowing love, and death to life.
Their eyes cried out what their sad hearts had hid,
They trembled as if waking from a dream.

Clutching their hearts, and raising their weak hands
In wonderment upon their brows amazed,
Again they gazed into the eyes' full depths
And lowered glances in a sweet confusion
Until with growing longing called she: "Tristan!"
And with an answering voice he cried: "Isolda!"
Trembling and overcome with love, she sank
Upon his breast, sweet whispering: "Traitor lover!"
While he: "Divinest woman!" called her fondly.
Ardent they spoke, most tenderly embracing,
And all the silence thrilled and throbbed with bliss.

Sudden broke in the clamor of the men
Shouting without: "Hail! Hail! King Mark! All hail!"

Now at the shout, Brangäna turned her eyes
From gazing o'er the ship's side at the waves,
And saw the lovers in each other's arms,
And in despair, wringing her hands, she cried:
"Oh, woe is me! What have I foolish wrought!
No speedy death, but sorrow all eternal!
The senseless deed will cry aloud to Heaven!"

The lovers started, slowly drew apart,
And all bewildered Tristan deeply mused:
"What troubled dream of Tristan's honor lost?"

THE ENCHANTED DRINK

While she, distressed, soft murmured with a sigh:
"Had I strange fancies of Isolda's shame?"

He asked: "And have I lost thee?" But she spake:
"Have I repulsed thee?" And she gazed and smiled.
And Tristan cried, and her voice mingled in:
"O strange enchantment of the magic art!
O yearning love and sweetly blossoming bliss!
Languor of love, aflame with glowing joy,
Wild in the heart, it throbs and ever sings!
Isolda! Tristan! Tristan and Isolda!
Love has escaped the world, but we have won it!
Thou, only thou, art love's supremest bliss!"

Now while they murmured rhapsodies divine,
The curtains of the ship were drawn apart;
The whole ship's crew and happy company
Of knights and sailors gathered on the deck.
With shouts of joy, they looked toward the shore
Where on the cliffs a mighty castle stood.
But Tristan and Isolda saw it not,
Nothing saw they of what was passing round,
Absorbed, enamored in their new found joy.

Brangäna to the waiting-women called:
"Make haste! The mantle! Bring the royal robe!"
Then rushed between the lovers, crying out:
"Wake up, ye hapless ones! See where we are!"

She placed the royal mantle on Isolda,
Who heeded not, entranced and dreaming still.

Again the shouts of multitudes of men:
"Hail! Hail! Our monarch! Thrice hail to King Mark!"

Now Kurvenal drew near, and gaily spake:
"Hail to thee, Tristan! Hero of good fortune!
See where King Mark with royal retinue
Comes in his proudest ship with brave array!
Ah! how he doth rejoice the way is short
That he must go to woo and win his bride!"

Quoth Tristan, looking up all dazed: "Who comes?"
Surprised, he answered: "Certes, 'tis the King!"
But Tristan, still bewildered, asked: "What King?"
Then Kurvenal quick pointed o'er the side
And Tristan gazed forth in a deep abstraction.

Once more the people shouted, waving hats:
"Hail to King Mark! All hail! Thrice hail! King Mark!"

But poor Isolda, all bewildered, spake:
"Brangäna, what is it? What mean these cries?"
Soothing her fears, her maid made quick reply:
"Isolda, mistress, pray compose thyself."
Isolda asked: "Oh, tell me where I am!
Am I still living? What then was that draught?"

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In deep despair Brangäna answered her:
"The love-drink, — it was not the draught of death!"

Again the lovers sought each other's arms
And murmured fondly each the other's name,
The while a speechless terror filled their souls.
"And must I live?" she cried, and swooned away
Upon his breast, a rapture in her heart;
While he, exultant, murmured in his joy:
"O rapture born of hopes and fond illusion!
O hallowed joy fashioned from passing dreams!"

Louder and louder grew the shouts and cries,
And many men were climbing o'er the bulwarks;
Here lowered they a bridge; all were expectant;
For royal guests drew near in royal state
And multitudes were crying in acclaim:
"Hail to King Mark! Great King of Cornwall, hail!"

PART II. THE ENCHANTED NIGHT

THE ENCHANTED NIGHT

HE castle of King Mark frowns from the cliff
Upon the weird and sombre Cornish coast.
O wonderful Tintagel by the sea,
Where beat the mighty surges of the deep
And echo in the thunders underneath
The hollow precipice where Merlin dwelt,
The pleasure-walks, the field of tournament,
And all the rugged ways along the cliffs
That look toward Lyonesse and Brittany.
A heavy sea is leaping on the rocks,
And bellowing in the vast and rumbling caves.
The castle garden, beauteous with trees
And fragrant with the climbing vines and shrubs,
Leads by stone steps to fair Isolda's chamber.
It is a clear and balmy summer night
And near the open door a torch is burning.
Anon the dim sounds of the chase are heard.
Brangäna stood upon the steps and gazed
Far off at the receding hunters' train.
Soon came the fair Isolda from her chamber,
Eager, and speaking in excited words:
"Dost thou still hear them? To these ears of mine
All sound of hunting seems to die away."

Her maid, still listening, spake: "Nay, they are near:
Yonder I hear the tumult even now."
Isolda, listening, said: "'T is but thy fears

Mislead thee. 'T is the sound of rustling leaves
Tossed by the laughing winds that thou dost hear."

Brangäna spake: "The wildness of desire
Doth play false to thine ear, for thou dost hear
What thy fond heart doth wish. I hear the horns."

But fair Isolda listened long and murmured:
"Surely no sound of horns were half so sweet.
If horns were blowing, could I hear that song
Of murmuring fountain, plashing with its ripples?
Only in the still night it laughs and sings.
Who waits and longs for me in this still night?
And wilt thou keep him longing from my side
Because forsooth thy fancy heareth horns?"

Remembering Melot's oft suspicious eyes
Since he beheld that scene upon the ship,
Startled, Brangäna spake with trembling voice:
"Who waits for thee? Oh, harken to my warning!
A spy is waiting nightly to ensnare him.
Oft have I seen him lurking craftily.
Beware of Melot and his snares of hate!"

Isolda asked: "Sir Melot, dost thou mean?
'T is false! Is he not Tristan's trustiest friend?
May I not see my true love now forsooth,
Since he and Tristan always are together?"

Up spake the maid: "What makes me fear the man
Doth seem to make thee friendlier to him.
Through Tristan to King Mark is Melot's way, —
He sows the seed of lies in King Mark's ear.
'T was this same seed to-day sown at the council
Decreed this night-hunt. Ah! thou dost not dream
How great the quarry that they hunt to-night."

But fair Isolda said: "For Tristan's sake
His good friend Melot planned this happy scheme.
Wouldst thou still scorn his friendship and his faith?
He serves Isolda better far than thou,
And gives us just such aid as thou refusest!
Oh, spare me further worry and delay, —
The signal, good Brangäna, give the signal!
Put out the last faint glimmer of the torch
That Night may wrap us in her darkest veil!
Already silence swathes the hedge and house,
Already peace enthralls and fills my heart.
Put out the torch, quench its last fleeing ray,
And let my well-beloved come to me!"

Brangäna moaned: "Quench not the warning flame!
It warns thee of dread peril! Ah, woe 's me!
Oh, that unholy draught my hands prepared!
Unfaithful I for once opposed thine order.
Oh, had I deaf and blind but just obeyed thee,

Death had it been to thee and thy dishonor.
But now thy shame and sorrow, 't is my work."

Isolda cried: "Thy work? O foolish girl,
Dost thou not know a goddess men call Love?
Dost thou not know the marvel of her might?
Queen of brave spirits, ruler of the world,
Her servants are the powers of Life and Death;
Pleasure and pain she weaveth in her web,
She mingles evil in her works of love.
I dared to do the deed and work of Death;
But Love hath conquered with a greater
  might:
The death-condemned she claimed as her own
  prey
And planned our fate as to her seemeth good.
How she may purpose, what the end may be,
What she may choose for me, or whither lead,
Her I belong to, her shall I obey!"

Brangäna pleaded with her earnestly:
"And must the magic drink of love for thee
Quench all the light of reason in thy soul,—
Yet canst thou not take heed when I give warn-
  ing?
Only this once I pray thee list my pleading!
This flaming beacon warns thee of great
  peril,—
Oh, do not quench the torch this fateful night!"

Isolda spake exultant and defiant:
"She who within my heart kindles the glow,
She who my bosom fills with fragrant fire,
She who as sunrise laughs within my soul,

Love's Goddess wills that it be night around her—
So that her light may shine, let thine be quenched."

Whereat she quickly came and seized the torch,
Speaking the while to her faint, trembling maid:
"Go to the watch-tower! There keep faithful ward!
This torch—and if it were my flame of life,
Laughing I 'd quench it!"
On the ground she threw it,
Where slowly it died out. Brangäna turned
And climbed the battlements. But fair Isolda
Listened and looked with longing in her heart.
At length she saw her lover in the distance
Approaching through a colonnade of trees.
She beckoned with a kerchief and he hastened.
A moment more, their arms were round each other,
And he has cried: "Isolda, my beloved!"
And she has whispered: "Tristan, my true lover!"
Both voices mingled as he fondly cried:
"Oh, art thou really mine? do I behold thee?
Dare I embrace thee? can I trust my eyes?
At last, dear love, at last! Here, on my breast,
Fondly I clasp thee! Is it thine own self?
Are these thine eyes? Are these thy ruby lips?
Here is thy hand! here thy true pulsing heart!
'T is I! 'T is thou! held in these loving arms!
Is it no fancy, and no passing dream?
Oh, highest bliss of heart, oh, sweetest joy,

Fairest and bravest, holiest delight!
Pleasure unequalled, boundless, fathomless!
Eternal, yea, eternal is our love!
All unforeseen, unheard of, overpowering,
Lifted to heaven, shouting for pure joy,
Outpouring bliss, lost in the highest heaven,
Forgetting all the world! Tristan, Isolda!
Mine, thine, we two forever and forever!"

So in the rapture of exultant love
They wooed and whispered. Tristan spake again:
"Oh, but that torch, how long it seemed to burn!
The sun had sunk, and day had faded out,
Yet it burned on, nor could the daylight quench
Its spiteful gleam, its jealous, envious warning,
Set at my loved one's door to hold me off!"

Isolda answered: "'T was thy loved one's hand
That quenched the torch. What my maid feared
Was naught of fear to me! Strong in the might
And keeping of Love's Goddess, should I fear
The day? And yet the day thus driven forth
Took its revenge, and leagued it with thy sins.
What the dusk torch of night shall give to thee
Thou must give back to the imperial sun
That it may shimmer there in lonely splendor!
How did I bear it? Can I bear it still?"

With glowing heart spake Tristan eagerly:
"Oh, now to this sweet night we give ourselves!
The thievish, jealous day planned to divide us!
Yet we no more believe its foolish lies.

ISOLDA GIVES THE SIGNAL

All its vain brightness and its pomp and splendor
Are laughter unto him whom holy Night
Has lightened with the love-light of her eyes.
The fleeting gleam of day blinds us no more.
He who has gazed into the night of death,
To whom the mystic secret has been whispered,
To him the daylight with its falsehoods fair,
Its fame and honor, might and shining wealth,
Are as the motes that dance within the sunbeam.
Through all the hollow day one longing grows —
Longing for night, the deep and holy Night
When the eternal primal light of love
Smileth upon him."
Then gently Tristan drew
The maiden to a fragrant bank of flowers,
Whereon she seated her with queenly grace,
And as he sank beside her on the sward,
Resting his head upon her loving arm,
He murmured what her own heart echoed well:

"O NIGHT of love! enfold us as the blest!
Give us oblivion! Make us forget
That we are living! Take us to thy breast,
And free us from the world and all its fret!

"See! the last lights go out, and with them go
False dreams, forebodings, and all gruesome power, —
With the sweet breathing of the twilight glow,
Hushing the earth to sleep! O sacred hour!

"And though forsooth from out the heaven above
We stole the sun to light our happy hearts,
The stars still shine, the streaming stars of love,
Spinning, like planets, to thy witching arts.

"Thine eyes are brightest stars of love's dear night;
Thy fond heart draws me unto love's fair goal;
Thy luscious lips are nectar of delight, —
We breathe one breath, we live one life and soul.

"Thy beauty fills and blinds my willing eyes;
The great world fades with all its pomp divine;
No more I love its baubles, fear its lies, —
For thou art all my world and I am thine!

"Now let us weave our web of ecstasy;
Now let us dream our high and holy dreams;
Our purest love from all illusion free, —
A sleep that wakes not, till all Heaven gleams!"

Singing and whispering their honeyed words,
The lovers rested on the flowery bank
Close to each other, all absorbed and rapt
In fond delight, rejoicing in each other.
They took no heed of the fast flying hours
And lost all count of time in passing joy,
Till from the watch-tower, all invisible,
Brangäna sang a warning to their hearts:

"LONELY I watch
All through the night,
Ye that are lost
In dreams of delight—
Have a care! have a care!

"Laughter and love
Are gone with the morning,
Swift flees the night,
Sorrow is dawning!
Beware! oh, beware!"

And at the warning, fair Isolda cried
With premonition: "Listen, my beloved!"

But Tristan, all oblivious of the world,
Thralled in the sweetness of his bliss, replied:
"Thus would I die,—with thee, with love, with joy!"

Isolda murmured: "Oh, thou envious watcher!"
And Tristan added: "Let me never waken
From this fair dream of happiness divine."
But she responded: "Tristan, but the dawn
Must rouse thee."
"Nay," he answered: "Dawn
Must yield to death."
But gently spake she on:
"Can dawn and death together bring the prize?"

Fondly he drew her to him with the words:
"Oh, could we only die together thus!
Always each other's, and forever one!

Without a thought of fear, or rude awakening,
Enthralled in love, suffused in loving joy,
Full satisfied in each forevermore."

And looking in his eyes, she softly spake:
"Yea, would that we might die together thus.
Always each other's, and forever one!
Without a thought of fear, or rude awakening,
Sharing the bliss of love together thus,—
In love alone our heaven and our all."
She laid her head upon his loving heart
And murmured sweet fond nothings in his ear.

Again Brangäna, warning from the tower:

"HAVE care! have care!
The night is gone!
Behold the dawn!
Beware! beware!"

And at this second warning Tristan smiled
And spake in mockery: "Shall I go hide?
Shall I awake, and let the dawn be victor?
Or shall I now defy its direful threats?
Perchance the dawn but tests our radiant
courage!"

Isolda cried: "Nay, let me rather die.
Naught shall awake me from this bliss divine.
Let dawn give place to death. I will defy it.
The night shall guard us, and the dawn shall
bless."

She laughed and ran among the shadowy trees,

And Tristan followed her, and quickly caught her,
And held her fondly in his arms, caressing
And covering her with kisses, while they sang
A rapturous love-song that their hearts knew well:

"O NIGHT of bliss, O night serene, immortal, —
Night of our rapture, night of love's fair portal, —
Enthralled in joy, absorbed in rarest gladness,
Who would abjure such night of tragic madness?

"Afar from us the world is rudely shaken;
Afar from us the dawn doth coldly waken;
With partings and all bitter sad complainings,
With falsehoods and the hypocrite's dark feignings.

"Enfolded by the night, no more concealing,
We love and trust, we live in holiest feeling;
Our lofty home in infinite far gleamings,
Built of our glorious and radiant dreamings.

"No more shall differing names our fate dissever,
One noble name shall be our own forever;
Together grow our lives in grace and beauty,
Together learn fresh wisdom, find new duty.

"Together shall our flame of love up-soar, —
One breath, one heart, one soul forevermore.

Oh, what a rapturous joy is love confessed!
What fiery tumult in Love's glowing breast!"

Sudden a piercing cry Brangäna gave
In warning from the tower. But still absorbed
In rapturous oblivion the lovers
Looked in each other's eyes and whispered love.
A moment more and Kurvenal rushed in
With naked sword and cried: "Tristan, on guard!"
For there a motley company had come,
King Mark and Melot and the courtiers
In hunting costumes gay among the trees.
Amazed they paused before the astonished lovers.
Brangäna from the battlements had rushed
And given to Isolda her support,
Who now in shame averted her fair face.
Tristan stood forth and stretched abroad his mantle
To shield Isolda from the curious eyes.
Full in the face he met their piercing gaze
And stood immovable with dauntless courage.
Faint dawn has come. And now at length he spake:
"The desolate day at last, — for the last time!"

Then Melot stood out boldly and spake forth:
"Tell me, my King, was not my warning true?
I staked my head as pawn, — is it not saved?
I promised thou shouldst see his amorous deeds.
Thus have I saved thine honor from disgrace."

THE DISCOVERY BY THE KING

And deeply moved, the King found trembling voice:
"Hast thou done truly? Is it not some dream?
Behold him yonder, truest of all men;
Look on his face, the best friend of my friends!
And yet this faithful friend has pierced my heart, —
False as a bitter foe, Tristan deceived me?
If so, what hope have I Melot is true,
Or that his prudent words shall save the honor
That Tristan in his falseness stole from me?"

But Tristan cried with vehemence and scorn:
"False phantoms of the morning, dreams of dawn,
Empty and vain illusions, — hence! avaunt!"

Astounded spake the King, more deeply moved:
"What now? This, Tristan, this from thee to me!
Where hath truth fled, if Tristan be thus false?
Where shall we look for honor or true men
If Tristan, fount of faith, is lost to us?
Yea, Virtue once chose Tristan for her shield.
Where has she fled, since her strong buckler 's gone,
Since Tristan forsakes virtue and betrays me!"

Tristan's sad eyes deep lowered to the ground,
And more and more dejected showed his mien
As spake the King in bitterest reproach:
"Why hast thou ever wrought me noble service,

Why for King Mark sought glory, grandeur, power?
Must all these valiant deeds of fame and honor
Be paid for at this heavy price of shame?
Seemed the reward so scant and small withal, —
Riches and name and heirship to the realm?
When, years ago, Mark, still a childless man,
Saw his wife die, such was his love to thee,
He called thee son and heir, and was content.
And when the people, courtiers and peasants,
Clamored with prayer and threat for a new queen,
A consort for the realm; when thou thyself
Didst plead so fervently for court and country,
Firm he refused both courtiers and peasants
And thee, with gentle craft, till thou didst threaten
To leave both court and kingdom evermore
If thou wert not sent forth to win the bride:
And so he let thee do. — This loveliest woman
Thy valor won me. Who could look on her,
Could speak to her, call her his very own,
Except with boundless pride and constant blessing?
Her whom I drew not near because of awe,
Her whom I own, yet have possessed her never,
Her a true princess, proud in race and peerless,
Her who should quicken, brighten life in me,
Queenliest bride, thou broughtest her to me.
Now must I live in Hell, my Heaven lost?
Now must I bear this shame, unhelped of tears?
Who will make clear the sources of this woe, —
Who will disclose the mystery unfathomed?"

Pitiful eyes raised Tristan as he spake:
"My King, I cannot clear the mystery,
What thou dost ask me thou canst never know."
He spake, and to Isolda turned, who looked
Into his eyes in tender, ardent longing.
He paused a moment, then continued slowly:
"Whither goes Tristan now, wilt thou go with him?
The land that Tristan means scarce knows the sun.
It is that far off land of Brittany
Where many years ago my mother bore me—
Death gave her me, and in death's arms she slept.
There where she brought me to the dawn of light
Was Love's fair mountain-top, dream-land of night,
From which I once awoke. There Tristan calls thee,
Thither he goes before,—Isolda, say,
Whether both brave and true, thou followest him."

And calmly with brave voice she answered him:
"Long time ago, when to a far strange land,
Traitor and friend, yet true and kind, thou askedst
Isolda to voyage forth, did she not go?
Now when thou askest her to thine own kingdom,
Dost think that she will fear that land of lands

By which the whole wide world is broadly spanned?
Where Tristan's house and home, there is my own.
Him whom she follows loyal and most gentle,
Now let him show the way unto Isolda!"

And at these brave words Tristan quickly stooped
And kissed her tenderly upon the forehead.
But Melot furious rushed with naked sword,
And cried: "Thou traitor, hold! Vengeance, my King!
Wilt thou endure this scorn and bitter shame?"

Spake Tristan, drawing sword and turning quick:
"Who stakes his worthless life against my life?"
He fixed his gaze on Melot as he said:
"This was my friend! And oft he told me truly
How much he loved me, and my fame and honor.
'T was he who filled my heart with pride, and urged
That I should gain me honor and renown
By wedding thee, Isolda, to the King!
Thine eyes, Isolda, have enthralled his heart,
His jealousy has made him false to me
As I unto the King. Now, guard thee, Melot!"

So Melot struck, and Tristan, sudden wounded,
Let fall his sword, and to the ground had sunk,

But Kurvenal quick bore him in his arms,
And on his breast Isolda threw herself
With passionate kisses and a flood of tears.

A moment, and King Mark held Melot back,
Then slow withdrew with all his followers.
A moment more, Isolda rose and hastened
Weeping into the castle's open doorway.
So Kurvenal raised up his wounded master,
And on his charger bore him through the forests.
And the sun rose, and a new day had come.

PART III. THE REVEALING OF DEATH

THE REVEALING OF DEATH

PON the cliffs in ancient Brittany
There stands a mighty castle of renown,
Within its frowning walls a garden grows;
One side hemmed in by towering battlements,
The other by a low wall and a watch-tower;
Beyond the castle-gate is seen the sea,
The wide expanse of shimmering, wondrous sea.
The place seems half deserted, badly kept,
And part is ruins, thickly overgrown
By grass and ivy.
Here within the garden,
Under the shadow of a lofty lime-tree,
Lay Tristan sleeping. On a couch he lay,
Stretched out as if the life had waned away.
There at his head sat Kurvenal, and bent
Slowly and sadly over him, and listened
Most anxious to his breathing. For with death
These many days he battled for the life
Of him he loved and served. Now from without
Was heard sad music of a shepherd's pipe,
And in a moment more the shepherd came
Leaning upon the wall, and gently asking:
"Ho! Kurvenal! Tell me, my honest friend,
Is he not yet awake?"
But Kurvenal,
Shaking his head most sadly, answered him:
"Ah, if he waked, 't were only thus to leave us
Forevermore; unless that one witch-woman,
She the enchantress, with her charms and simples,

Quick cometh to our aid. Now see ye naught?
Is there no ship far yonder on the sea?"

Then up the shepherd spake with eager voice:
"Nay, thou wouldst hear a new tune on my pipes, —
The lustiest love-song that my heart could make.
But tell me truly, my old faithful friend,
What is the sorrow that afflicts our lord?"

He answered: "Ask me not! Thou canst not know.
Watch thou the sea, and when thou seest a ship,
Strike up the merriest tune thy lips can frame!"

The shepherd turned and slowly scanned the sea,
Shading his eyes the while with his right hand.
Then with the words: "The sea is waste and drear,"
He took his reeds, and playing, strode away.

Scarce had he gone when Tristan, slightly moving,
Faint whispered: "That old tune I know so well, —
Why do I wake to that?"
His eyes slow opened;
He turned his head and spake: "Pray, where am I?"
While Kurvenal in joyous agitation
Upstarted, crying: "Ha! it is his voice!
Tristan! My lord! my hero! valiant Tristan!"

He asked with effort: "Who—is calling—
me?"

And quick the answer: "Now at last, at last,
Life calls to thee! O life, O sweetest life,
Unto my Tristan given all anew!"

Faintly he asked: "Is 't thou, my Kurvenal?
Where was I? and where am I? tell me, pray."

Joyous the fond reply: "Where art thou now?
In peace and quiet, and in safe retreat,—
This is Kareol, may it please my lord!
Dost thou not know the castle of thy fathers?"

Surprised he asked: "We at my father's castle?"
Said Kurvenal: "Behold the place around
thee!"
Again he asked: "What music was it waked
me?"
He spake: "It was the piping of the shepherd.
Dost thou not hear it yet? Upon the hills
He plays his reeds, tending thy flocks and
herds."
Spake Tristan in surprise: "My flocks and
herds!"
And Kurvenal made haste to answer him:
"My lord, believe me. It is very truth,
Thy house, thy home, thy courtyards, and thy
towers,
Hearthstone, and flocks. Thy faithful old retainers
Have guarded for thee, their beloved lord,

As best they might this castle and its riches,
Which in thy goodness thou once gavest them
When to a far land thou didst sail away."

Troubled he asked: "Where was that distant land?"

And Kurvenal made answer: "Why, 't was Cornwall,
Where all there was of joy and happy fortune,
Honor and splendid prowess and renown,
Tristan, so bright and brave, so lightly won."

Confused, he asked: "And am I still in Cornwall?"
But he was answered: "Nay! in Kareol."
Again he queried: "But how came I here?"

Proudly the words: "Heigho! how camest thou here?
No horse, but prancing ship didst bring thee here.
And on my broad, strong shoulders to the ship
And to the shore,—and thus to Brittany,
To thine own land, here to thy native soil,
Where these thy fields and pleasures are around thee;
And where the blessed sunshine that thou lovest
Shall cheer and heal thee of thy deadly wounds."

He leaned caressingly on Tristan's shoulder,
Who, looking up at him, most sadly spake:
"Thinkest thou thus,—I know it is not so,

Yet can I not explain it all to thee!
Where I awakened scarcely do I know,
Where I abode, e'en that I cannot say.
I never saw the sun, nor land, nor people,
Yet what I saw, that seemeth beyond words;
It was the land where I have always been,
And whither I shall go forevermore;
It was the boundless realm of wondrous night.
There one great wisdom held me in its thralldom—
Forgetfulness, and deep and sweet oblivion;
How far away were gone all sad forebodings,
All wistful goadings,—shall I call them thus?—
That somehow drove me to the light of day.
What only now was left, Love's golden fire,
Drew me away from Death's desired embrace,—
Still drives me to the light that shines deceitful,
With bright and golden glory round Isolda.
Accursed day with all thy false effulgence,
Forever must thou waken deepest pain?
Forever must it burn, this torch of day,
Far in the night to keep our hearts apart?
Isolda dearest, oh, my sweetest, fairest!
When at the last wilt thou full quench the torch
That thou mayst light my happiness once more?
The light, how long and late it lingers on!
When will the house be still in slumber's peace?"

His voice, as on he spake, grew faint and fainter.
At last he sank in utter weariness;

And Kurvenal, who sat in deep distress
At his dear master's strange hallucination,
Now quickly rose and spake the earnest words:
"Her whom I once defied, through faith in thee,
For her to-day I long, as thou dost long.
Trust in my words, thou shalt behold her soon,
Here and to-day! I promise thee this solace,
If she still dwells within the realm of life."

Then, very faintly, Tristan smiled and whispered:
"The light still burns, the house is not yet dark;
Isolda lives and watches there for me,
I hear her calling to me through the night."

And gladly Kurvenal encouraged him:
"If she but lives, then let hope smile on thee.
Has Kurvenal but seemed to thee dull-pated,
To-day thou must not scold him, nor reproach,
For thou hast lain as still as lays the dead
Since that dread day when Melot, thrice accurst,
Dealt thee that deadly wound. How could I heal
That deep and fatal hurt? But to me came,
Fool that I am, the clever thought forsooth
That she who once had healed the grievous wounds
That Morold dealt, could heal these later wounds.
So quickly have I sought the best of leeches,
Sent unto Cornwall a most trusty servant,

TRISTAN DISTRAUGHT IN KAREOL

Who now is sailing o'er the silvery sea,
To bring thee health and healing with—
Isolda!"

And Tristan was beside himself with joy,
Hearing this good news. Struggling words he spake:
"Isolda cometh! My Isolda near!
O faithful friend, and high and noble friendship!"
He drew the faithful Kurvenal to him
And lovingly embraced him, speaking on:
"My Kurvenal, my trusty, faithful friend!
My truest friend of all, my heart now ranks thee!
Ah, how can Tristan give thee thanks enough?
My shield and shelter in the fight and strife,
My joy and sorrow always close at hand,
Those whom I hate, thou hatest with deep hate,
Those whom I love, thou lovest fervently.
When good King Mark most loyally I served
Thou wert to him as true as finest gold;
When I was false to him, my noble lord,
Thou also didst betray him eagerly;
For my sake thou forgettest thine own self;
And when I suffer, thou dost suffer too.
But what I suffer, that canst thou never feel,—
This dreadful yearning that burns up my heart;
This cruel smarting that consumes my soul.
Could I but tell thee, make thee well to know it,
Thou wouldst not tarry here a moment longer,
Nay! Thou wouldst hasten to the watch-tower yonder

With thy strained senses to gaze o'er the sea,
With longing look for her ship's flying sails.
Before the wind she drives to find me here!
On wings of burning love she steers for me!
See! see! her ship draws near, swift as her heart,
And see! the white flag waving on the mast!
Her ship! her ship! At last, 't is at the shore—
Look, Kurvenal, dost thou not see it there?"

But Kurvenal, unwilling now to leave him,
Still paused and lingered while his eager master
Looked toward him in a silent expectation.
Then came the plaintive piping of the shepherd,
And at that signal he spake gloomily:
"That means there is no ship that 's come in sight."

With waning interest, sad Tristan listened
And melancholy grew as slow he said:
"Is this the meaning of that old-time ditty?
Upon the evening breeze it sadly sounded
When, as a child, it told my father's death!
And on the morning's mist, more woeful still,
It told the death of her who gave me birth,
Giving her breath that I would gladly live.
Through all the pain this ancient song was sounding,
All made of longing, asking me thus early,
And asking still: 'And wherefore wast thou born

And what thy fate and what forsooth thy fortune?'
It is the old refrain, the eternal question,
Once more it tells my heart to yearn—and die!"
He spake and fell back senseless on the couch.

And Kurvenal, who strove to wake his lord,
But all in vain, cried out in utter anguish:
"My master! Tristan! O witchcraft of loving!
O direful power, and most cruel enchantment!
Fondest illusion in the whole wide world,
See what these tyrant dreams have wrought in man.
Here lies one now, most worthy noble knight,
One who has loved and is himself beloved,—
But tell me what reward has come to him
For all his ardor and his true devotion!"

Sobs almost drowned his voice as on he spake:
"Art thou then dead, or art thou living still?
Or has the witchcraft borne thy life away?"
He listened for the breathing. Then he cried:
"Joy! he still breathes, and lives, and moves his lips."

For Tristan murmured, faint as zephyr breath:
"The ship,—and canst thou not behold it yet?"
And soothing him he spake: "The ship? 'T is true!
'T is drawing very near to-day! 'T will soon be here,
It cannot be much longer on the way!"
Roused by the word, the master quickly cried:
"Yea, see Isolda, there upon the deck!

See how she smiles, the golden cup she holds,
The cup of full atonement and forgiveness!
Canst thou not see, — canst thou not see her now?
So full of grace she is, so full of goodness,
She floats like gentle flower on that wild sea,
On flying foam, like chariot of the ocean,
And with the billow's steeds she comes to me!
Oh, how her smile doth bring me perfect peace
And sweet repose! She brings me the last draught, —
The gift of sleep! Isolda! O Isolda!
How pure, how lovely art thou to my eyes!
But, Kurvenal, how strange thou didst not see!
Hast thou no eyes? Up to the watch-tower go,
Thou stupid wight, and mark thou seest now
What shines so wondrous, what I see so clear.
Dost thou not hear me? To the watch-tower go!
The ship, the ship! Isolda's nearing ship!
Thou must discern it! Surely thou dost see it!
Her ship 's in sight, — dost thou not see it yet?"

And as he spake and Kurvenal still lingered,
Behold! the shepherd's pipe was clearly heard
Playing a joyous strain, a song of love.
And springing up in transports of delight
He shouted: "Joy!" And rushing to the tower
Looked out upon the sea. Again he cried:
"Hurrah! the ship! I see her coming fast!
Down from the North I see her bearing swiftly!"

Rejoicing, Tristan spake: "Did I not know it?
Did I not tell thee all? Yes, yes! she lives

And gives me back my very life again.
How could Isolda, who is all my world,
Escape from out the world and leave me here?"

Then shouted Kurvenal: "Hurrah! Hurrah!
How bravely she is steering down her course!
How full her canvas with the bellowing wind!
See how she darts! See how she flies and drives!"
And Tristan asked: "The pennon? Is there pennon?"
He looked and cried: "Yea, the white flag of joy,
Cheery and bright, is streaming from the masthead."

Again spake Tristan: "Ah, what fond delight!
All shining in the sun Isolda comes,
My own Isolda, coming swift to me!
Cannot thine eyes discern her at the prow?"
He answered: "Nay, not yet. The ship is hid
This moment just behind a reef of rocks."

Alarmed he asked: "Behind a reef of rocks?
May there be danger? Oft those angry breakers
Have shattered ships. — Who steereth at the helm?"
Spake Kurvenal: "The steadiest of seamen."

Asked he: "That traitor helmsman, — Melot's ally?"
But Kurvenal made quick to reassure him,
And answered: "Trust him as thou trustest me."

Curtly spake Tristan: "Trust him, yea, as thou,
Traitor and caitiff! Dost thou see her yet?"
Slow he made answer. "No, not yet, not yet!"
And Tristan in despair wailed forth: "All lost!"

A moment later Kurvenal cried out:
"Bravo! Thank God! She clears the reef at last!
And happy now has reached the safer waters.
See, now the ship is steering straight to port."
And Tristan also shouted in his joy:
"Bravo! my Kurvenal! my truest friend,
All that I have shall be thy heritage!"

Spake Kurvenal: "She nears with wondrous speed!"
Asked Tristan, with a tremor in his voice:
"Now canst thou see her? Seest thou Isolda?"
He cried: "Yea, it is she. She waves her hand!"
And Tristan murmured: "O divinest woman!"
Still he reported: "Now the ship's to land!
Isolda — see! — with one exultant leap,
Lightly she springs from ship-deck to the shore."

Spoke Tristan sharply: "Quickly from the watch-tower,
Thou stupid gazer! Get thee to the strand,
And help my well-loved lady with thy strength!"

He answered joyful: "Fear not! I will bring her!

Trust my strong arms. But, Tristan, promise me
That thou wilt stay here peaceful on thy couch."
He hastened off. And Tristan in a fever
Tossed on his couch, in wild excitement speaking:
"O glorious sunlight! And O wondrous daylight!
O joy-bestowing, radiant, blessed day!
How swift my blood, how shouts my heart for joy!
Bliss without measure, rapture without reason!
How can I bear it on this quiet couch?
Up and away where valiant hearts are beating!
Tristan, the hero, in exultant power
At last hath torn himself away from death."
He raised himself erect, and still spake on:
"Once with my bleeding wounds I fought with Morold;
To-day with bleeding wounds I greet Isolda."

And in defiance of the face of death,
He tore the bandage from his wound and cried:
"Ha, ha! my blood! how merrily it flows!"
Down from his couch he sprang, and staggered forward,
With the wild cry: "She who can close my wound
For me forever, comes like heavenly hero,
Comes like a god to heal me of all ill!
Let the world fade! My universe comes swift!"

He staggered forward, as he heard a voice:

"Tristan! my Tristan! my beloved Tristan!"
And in a frantic joy he shouted forth:
"Hark! how I hear the light a-calling me!
The torch! Ah, now 't is quenched! I come! I
come!"

A moment more, Isolda has rushed in,
Breathless. And Tristan, all delirious
With joy and fever, staggered wildly to her.
Fondly she clasped him in her loving arms
And gently to the ground he sank away.

Death, oft invoked with ardor, now drew near,
And night, the blessed shrouder of the day,
Enwrapped him in her deep oblivious veil.
Isolda called: "Tristan!" He woke and looked
Up in her eyes, and murmured: "Dear Isolda!"
And breathed his last.
But she would not believe
His heart was still, and cried in wild despair:
"'T is I, my best beloved! Yea, 't is I!
Rise up once more! Oh, hearken to my voice!
Wilt thou not heed? Isolda calls to thee!
Isolda comes to die with her own Tristan.
Art thou yet silent? Oh, for just a moment,
For one short moment, open thy dear eyes.—
Such weary days she waited for thee, longing
To wake with thee one single godlike moment.
Doth Tristan now deprive his fond Isolda
Of this one fleeting last exultant joy?—
The wound—where is it? Let me heal it quick,
That we may share the rapture of the night.
Not from thy wound must thou expire and leave
me!

Together must we quench the light of life!
How vacant are his eyes! how still his heart!
My faithless Tristan, dost thou treat me thus?
Not one sigh from the flowing tide of life!
And must she now before thee stand and weep
Who, joyous at the thought of wedding thee,
Dared all, and fearless sailed the angry sea? —
Too late! Too late! Most arrogant and cruel,
Thou castest on me curse of banishment!
Is there no solace for my guilt and sorrow?
Must I not tell my heavy woes to thee?
But once again! Just once again, awaken!
Tristan! my own! Oh, harken! He awakes!
My best beloved! And oh, welcome night!"
She sank unconscious upon Tristan's body.

Tristan, — thy name is sorrow, and deep woe,
For so thy mother named thee in her grief.
Trist was her parting, trist her dying words —
Sad is thy heart, bitter thy tragedy.
But now upon the mystic seas of death
Sail with Isolda forth forevermore —
Death and the night have brought immortal life.

And Kurvenal, who close had followed her,
Hearing her words, and gazing at his master,
Stood at the gateway in sad speechless horror;
The tragedy had turned his heart to stone,
But now he stirred, for from the distant strand
Came sound of voices and the clash of weapons.
A moment, and the shepherd climbed the wall
And called to Kurvenal with hurried words:
"Hark, Kurvenal! Another ship has come!"
He started up in haste, ran to the watch-tower,

And gazed upon the sea, while in amaze
The shepherd stood apart, and sadly looked
Upon the tragic sorrow of the lovers.

Then Kurvenal in fiery anger cried:
"O death and Hell! Get all the weapons ready!
There on the strand I see King Mark and Melot.
Snatch arms and missiles! Help me! Guard the gate!"

He loudly called the shepherds, and they rushed
To shut the gateway and make barricade,
But swiftly rushing in their sailors cried:
"King Mark and all his men have set on us!
Defence is useless! We are overpowered!"
Then Kurvenal called out: "Stand to and help!
While my life lasts, no foe shall enter here!"

A voice called from below: "Isolda! Mistress!"
And Kurvenal low said: "It is Brangäna!"
Then loud he called: "What art thou seeking here?"
She answered: "Kurvenal, close not the gate!
Where is Isolda?" But he shouted forth:
"Thou traitress also! Woe to thee, accurst!"

Then Melot's voice was heard: "Stand back, thou fool!
Bar not the way!" Full savagely and wild
Kurvenal laughed and cried: "Ha! ha! the day
Has come at last when I shall meet with thee!"

Scarce had the words escaped his angry lips
Ere Melot and his men were in the gateway
Brandishing swords and spears. And Kurvenal
Rushed upon Melot, struck a mighty blow,
And bore him to the ground with desperate lunge,
Crying in glee: "Die, thou accursed wretch!"
Gasped Melot: "Woe 's me — Tristan!" And he died.

Brangäna, still without the wall, called forth:
"O Kurvenal, thou 'rt mad! Hark, thou mistakest —"
He heeded not, but gave his men commands:
"Away, thou faithless maid! Men, follow me!
Come, drive them back!" And fierce they struck and fought.

Without the wall, the voice of King Mark called:
"Hold, madman! Art bereft of all thy senses?"
But in defiance Kurvenal cried out:
"Here death alone is raging! Nothing else,
O King, can here be had! Wouldst thou choose death,
Then come!"
And at the word, as King Mark came,
He set upon him and his followers.
But King Mark cried: "Back, poor deluded fool!"

Meanwhile Brangäna clambered o'er the wall
And to her mistress hurried with the cry:
"Isolda! lady! joy to thee and safety! —

Alas! what sight is this I see before me!
Isolda, mistress! Art thou dead, or living?"
And in deep anguish knelt she at her side.

Then came King Mark, forcing his passage in
Against the foemen at the gate, and spake:
"Oh, sad mistake and bitterest delusion!
Tristan, where art thou?" Kurvenal, sore wounded,
Staggered and cried: "See, there he lieth—there—
Where I lie too—" At Tristan's feet he sank.
And King Mark turned his eyes and saw the lovers
Lifeless before him, and he moaned in sorrow:
"Tristan, my Tristan! And Isolda! Woe!"

Grasping the hand of Tristan lovingly,
Cried Kurvenal: "O Tristan! truest heart!
Pray do not blame me, if thy faithful friend
Now seeks to follow thee!" And he was dead.

Gazing upon them mournfully, King Mark
Spake: "Dead together! Is all ended now?
My hero, Tristan! My most faithful friend!
Must thou again to-day betray thy friend,
Now when he comes with pledge of fullest faith?
Awake! oh, wake, and hear my lamentation,
Thou faithless and yet faithful dearest friend!"
He knelt above their bodies, sobbing long.

Sudden a cry. Brangäna had revived
Isolda in her arms, and joyful cried:

ISOLDA'S LAMENT OVER TRISTAN

"She wakes! she lives! Isolda, mistress, hear!
Hear me, thou sweetest lady! joyous news
Have I for thee. Wilt thou not trust Brangäna?
Her thoughtless witless guilt she hath atoned.
When thou hadst gone, quickly she found the King;
No sooner had he learned the fatal secret
Of the love-potion and its magic spell
Than with all pain and haste he put to sea
That he might find thee, yea, and give thee up
Into the loving arms of thy dear friend."

Most tenderly and gracious spake King Mark:
"Oh, why, Isolda, comes this woe to me?
For when it was revealed to me at last
What was before mysterious and sad,
What joy it was to find my faithless friend
Still faithful, and all free from stain and guilt!
To give thee, wed thee, to this hero-friend,
With wingèd sails I bounded after thee;
But dark misfortune and tempestuous fate
Have overreached the bringer of sweet peace!
Increased have I the harvest of grim death,
And brought delusion into deeper woe!"

Whispered Brangäna to Isolda's ear:
"Dost thou not hear? Isolda! dearest lady!
Dost thou not fully hear the happy truth?"

But all unconscious of what passed around her,
Isolda fixed her gaze on Tristan's face;
And in a transport of exultant joy
She cried: "How gentle and how kind he smiles!

See how his eyelids open softly, sweetly!
Oh, see, dear friend! Oh, can you not perceive
How bright he shines in ever-growing brightness?
Mark how he rises radiant clothed in starlight!
Oh, see, dear friends! Oh, can you not perceive
How his great heart, so mighty and so strong,
Is beating calm and happy in his breast?
And how from his dear lips an incense breathes!
Oh, harken, friends! Feel ye and hear ye nothing?
Is it to me alone there comes this music
So wonderful, so tender, so appealing,
Sounding all joys, revealing happy secrets?
Hark! to this music from him gently breathing
There thrills through me a glory like a trumpet.
Round me it surges, flowing like the ocean!
Are these great waves about me throbbing breezes?
Are these sweet odors rolling fragrant billows?
How they do gleam and sing and glisten round me!
Oh, shall I breathe them, or just list their music?
Oh, shall I drink, or sink beneath their beauty,
Breathing my last? In billows ever rolling,
In boundless music, in the mighty world's
Great driving whirlwind to be borne aloft,
Absorbed, o'erwhelmed, godlike in highest bliss!"

She sank transfigured by her ecstasy
And lay in peace upon the heart of Tristan.
So were the blessed twain made one in death,

The stroke of love's own hand their bridal dower
To yet more perfect bliss in happier realms,
United in that grace that giveth all,
The crowning gift of fullest sacrifice.
And good King Mark, amid the sobs of woe,
Invoked a blessing on the loving dead.

The Revealing of Death

THE END

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